XIO3

GCACE

Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts

1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1996

November 28th Meeting!

The general meeting this month will feature Rowland Grant demonstrating his Spectre GCR, a Macintosh emulator for the ST. John Towler will also be there and he has a lot of knowledge of the Mac because of his GCR and his membership in the Mac club. Everything you wanted to know and were afraid to ask about the Macintosh! Also, because there is no December General meeting, John will bring two disks of the month. Only $2 each, and you get the latest software for the ST.

Inside

ATARI® NEWS AND RUMOURS

by Rowland Grant

At the end of this column in the last issue, I wondered what would happen to Atari's remaining assets. David Swartz has clarified the situation in a note on the internet. David was one of Atari's vice presidents. The Tramiels, and one or two other individuals, owned controlling interest in Atari Corp. However most of the stock they held was governed by SEC ruling 144 (insider trading etc.) which prevents the private sale of this stock on the market. A year ago it was becoming clear that the Atari Jaguar was failing. Sooner or later Atari would spiral into bankruptcy, taking the Tramiel shares with it. So the Tramiel family needed some way to liquidate their Atari holdings, worth about $130 million at the time. The story goes that either Jack Tramiel or August Liguori (Atari's financial officer) came up with the solution. If Atari merged with an ongoing, privately held business, and became part of that business, all Atari shares could be exchanged for new shares issued by the merged corporation. If the Tramiels were not officers in the new corporation, their shares would not be restricted and could be sold eventually (they may have to wait three years). Jack knew of a privately held business that was desperate for new capital, and would be happy to go along with the scheme.

But what does JTS get out of it? Well of course, there is Atari's $50 million in liquid assets. Also the merger would put JTS on the stock market at no cost. In addition, there is Atari's accumulated losses of some $150 million that JTS can set against future profits for tax purposes. This credit will be available only if JTS continues to do some business and maintain some operations of the former Atari Corp. JTS is not making much profit at the moment, so it may have to operate its Atari section for some time if it wants to use those tax credits. The name Atari must be used by JTS as it sells Jaguars and licenses Atari patents etc. So some form of Atari will be around until the tax credit is used up. David Swartz mentioned that it would be in Jack Tramiel's interest if he actively sought out more financing for JTS. After all, Jack has to wait awhile before he can cash out. I note that

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GCACE EXECUTIVE

President: Gordon Hooper 475-0857
E-Mail: ua558@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

Vice President: John Picken 598-2386

Secretary: Rowland Grant 598-3661
Treasurer: John Towler 382-5083
E-Mail: j.towlerl@genie.geis.com

Editor: Gordon Hooper 475-0857

ST Librarian: Ted Skrecky 598-6173
E-Mail: ud264@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

8-Bit Librarian: Noel Black 388-4527
E-Mail: uy390@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

BBS Sysop: Bob Nex 642-6358

Director: George Rose 652-0572

Director: Craig Carmichael 384-0499
E-Mail: omen@islandnet.com

CREDITS

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 300 8-bit public domain disks and 190 ST disks and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (604) 642-6795.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

http://www.@$!#^&*%(&%#!$

What is this garbage? It's an address on the much-hyped Information Superhighway, specifically the World Wide Web (WWW), that's what. You see these on magazine advertisements, TV ads, newspaper ads, at the end of TV newscasts ... they're ubiquitous. What they have in common is the word "ad" at the end. So what do you expect you'll find if you get on the WWW? You got it, Bubba. The majority of the sites on the WWW are trying to sell you something.

Is it worthwhile getting on the Internet, then. Yes and no. You can get on the Victoria Freenet for no charge. This gets you on the Internet and you can then use world-wide e-mail, access literally thousands of newsgroups, you can even get on the WWW, but you will see only the text portion of the sites, not the images. And all for no charge. However, the Freenet would like you to make a donation if you use it frequently, but it's fashioned after a public library. If you can't afford a donation, it's not necessary.

In order to see the pretty pictures in all those ads, you will have to get two programs, STiK and CAB, for the ST. You will also have to pay at least $29.95 a month for a commercial Internet provider, such as IslandNet. Do yourself a favour and stick to the Freenet. No matter what your interest or hobby, there will be a newsgroup devoted to it. This includes pornography and things such as how to make a bomb, but if you don't specifically go and look for these items, you'll never see them. And there are far more things that are innocuous than there are that are objectionable. After all, you can buy dirty magazines even at your local grocery store.

If you're not on the Information Superhighway yet, don't fret. A recent editorial in the Times Colonist (TC) informed us that Stats Can says that 96.2 per cent of Canadians don't use the Internet. Even half of the people who bought modems don't use them. The TC says the Internet pundits are flabbergasted. "Could it be that a nation of common-sense, cautious, intelligent beings are simply waiting for the Internet dust to settle before seeing what possible use it holds? Or are we all watching hockey instead?" - TC.

Gord

FOR HELP CALL:

General Information:	Gord Hooper	475-0857
8-Bit:	John Picken	598-2386
	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Bob Nex	642-6358
	Bob Etheridge	479-7271
Word Processing:	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Gord Hooper	475-0857
	John Picken	598-2386
Disk Compression:	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
	John Picken	598-2386
Printers:	John Picken	598-2386
Desktop Publishing:	Gord Hooper	475-0857
Telecommunication:	Bob Nex	642-6358
	John Picken	598-2386
Programming:	Rowland Grant	598-3661
	Bob Nex (Action)	642-6358
	John Picken (Machine)	598-2386

PEEKing Around

by Gordon F Hooper



... Welcome to new members JOHN ROBSON of Victoria, JOHN CRAWFORD of Pender Island and ED JONES, who is from the MIST group in Courtenay. Renewing were GEORGE McGUIRE and DANE STEGMAN from Akron, New York. I wrote out another receipt, but forgot to put the carbon in, so I apologize to whoever renewed or joined that I didn't mention ... Maybe Ed and MARK ERICKSON should have satellite meetings in Courtenay ... ROWLAND GRANT mentions that we will be getting a subscription to Atari Computing, the new British magazine ... JOHN PICKEN now has an 8-bit, ST and IBM clone in his little computer hideway. If anyone has a Mac at the right price (free), he'll probably add it ... BOB NEX and John have got the net restored to the Pothole BBS. John did the work, Bob just pays the long distance. Thanks, Bob. Now if only the Canucks and Seahawks could start winning, he'd be in sports-pig heaven ... NOEL BLACK is feeling better, and we are glad to see him back at meetings. Maybe he could talk Karen into donating her Mac to John ... Thanks to DOUG SKRECKY for sending me the next item. It was unattributed ...

ATTENTION:

VIRUS ALERT VIRUS ALERT VIRUS ALERT

Federal Bureaucrat Virus -- Divides your hard disk into hundreds of little units, each of which do practically nothing, but all of which claim to be the most important part of the computer.

Dan Quayle Virus -- Their is sumthing rong with your compueter, ewe just can't figyour out watt.

Politically Correct Virus -- never calls itself a "virus," but instead refers to itself as an "electronic micro-organism."

Ross Perot Virus -- Activates every component in your system just before the whole thing quits.

Mario Cuomo Virus -- It would be a great virus, but it refuses to run.

Oprah Winfrey Virus -- Your 2000 MB hard drive suddenly shrinks to 80 MB, then slowly expands back to 200 MB.

AT&T Virus -- Every three minutes it tells you what great service you're getting.

MCI Virus -- Every three minutes it reminds you that you are paying too much for the ATT Virus.

Ted Turner Virus -- Colorizes your monochrome monitor.

... To all the devious little skulkers out there who are searching for dirt on GCACE members, remember to phone GORD at 475-0857 when the foul deed is detected ...

Continued from Page 1

JTS has recently raised $15 million in additional working capital from a placement of convertible preferred stock. They will be going for a lot more money next year. This is not to cover losses. This is to cover the costs of an enormous increase in production. They are currently shipping 25 thousand drive units a week and are trying to expand to 40 thousand units a week by the end of the year. It would seem that the market and demand is there, and JTS is meeting its sales targets. If only Atari could have done that (sigh).

Don Thomas provided an interesting insight into the last days of the Jaguar. He says that in the summer of 1995, WalMart had agreed to place Jaguar systems and games in all 400 of its superstores. Atari invested heavily in new stock to meet the new orders. But in the holiday season the Jaguars did not sell very well. Sony had introduced its new Playstation with a half billion dollar budget. Atari couldn't match that level of advertising, or any level for that matter. Atari lowered the Jaguar's price to $99, and tried a few infomercials to save the situation, but to no avail. The kids wanted what they saw on regular TV and what their friends had. WalMart had many returns. So WalMart sent back the unsold Jaguars to Atari, which Atari was obliged to accept. The result is a warehouse in Santa Clara overflowing with semi-crushed boxes of Jaguar products. This kind of thing would help explain why there were differing sales totals of Jaguars announced. According to Atari, 135 thousand Jaguar consoles were actually sold to customers in U.S. in almost three years. Nintendo claims to have sold twice as many of its new Nintendo 64 game consoles in three days. There were only two games available too. But Nintendo spent many millions over many months advertising the new system before it reached the stores. The games are few at present but they look impressive. It takes a good product and an enormous advertising budget to stay in the video game market.

So there is lots of stock left to keep the Atari name going for a long time. There are now rumours saying that as many as 50 thousand Jaguar units remain unsold! Selling Jaguars in the current market will be difficult. Atari Corp. is no longer in business, and the Jaguar is now recognised as a discontinued product. They may be able to clear some units, but not 50 thousand. As time goes on the cost of storage and distribution will exceed the returns. Then the Jaguar units will have to be given away or even used as land fill. There is only one person representing Atari products at JTS. This is John Skruch who had been with Atari for over 13 years. Sales and support for the Jaguar is being handled by Computer West. Prices are low, at liquidation levels. Jaguar consoles are selling for $49.99 and most games shipped from Atari are now going for $9.99. In fact the latest deal is a Jaguar package with one game for $59.99. Various dealers have also marked Jaguar games down, but more recent issues are selling at around $20. Dave Davis at Computer West has announced that they will be shipping four new Jaguar titles. Breakout 2000 and Towers II will be released in December, Worms will come out in January and Zero Five in February. The price for each is $59.95 (US). Telegames, the publisher, has confirmed that these games are on schedule. There is no release date for Battlesphere. It was demonstrated again recently at Toadfest. It is near completion and could be ready in December at the earliest. Tom Harker of 4play seems to be in no hurry to put Battlesphere into production. However if sales of Towers and Breakout go well, Battlesphere should follow promptly. If the surviving Jaguar market is profitable, other programmers may take the trouble to complete another title or two. It won't be easy. There are few Jaguar development systems in use today. Apparently when it cancelled game development, Atari repossessed all hardware, software and documentation used to create Jaguar games. Only a few persons developing games privately still have the systems. Atari sold the development hardware to B&C ComputerVision and possibly Best Electronics. However the development system software and documentation were destroyed. Strange.

Don Thomas, one of Atari's last employees, complained that Atari's passing went almost without notice. Of course the computer press would have nothing to say since Atari has been out of computers for some time. But an article did come out in Wired magazine. There was a colourful section showing many of the personalities who had worked for Atari at one time or another. They included the two Steves (Wozniak and Jobs) who founded Apple, Jay Miner who designed the Amiga and many others. Don Thomas described the great pressure everyone worked under at Atari, and the penny pinching that was necessary to keep things afloat. Don himself went to work for Sony as did many of those who were dismissed from Atari earlier in the year. Mike Fulton, formerly of Atari is a "senior developer support engineer" at Sony. He says that his job is much the same as the one he had at Atari, but the work is more focused and a lot less stressful. It is ironic that they are all working on software for the Sony PlayStation, the product that delivered the coup de grace to Atari's Jaguar.

... the Sony Playstation, the product that delivered the coup de grâce to the Jaguar.

Buy Windows - Or Else!

(The HP 680C Story)

by Gordon F Hooper

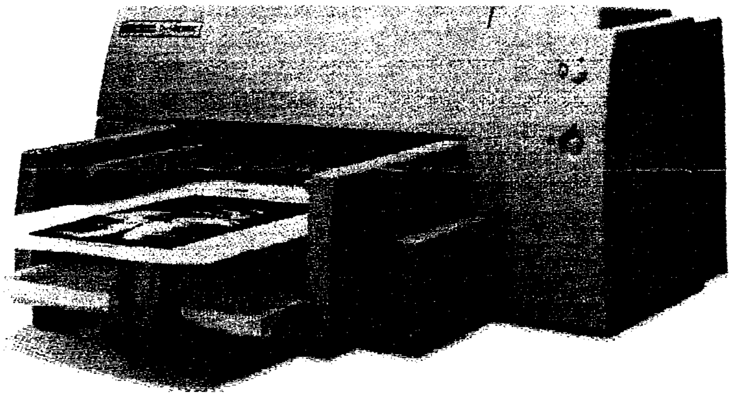
As your local Harbinger of Doom reporter, I would like to announce that the world has now officially gone to Hell in a handbasket. If you don't have Windows 95, you can't buy a new printer.

That's right. I recently went to buy a new colour printer, and because I had such good service from my Hewlett Packard (HP) DeskJet 500, I wanted another HP. A friend had recently bought an HP DeskJet 660C, and it did all that I wanted my printer to do, but I could find only one for sale, and it was priced just $20 cheaper than the new HP DeskJet 680C. It did some things the 660C didn't do, so I laid down enough coin of the realm to purchase it.

Now the fun began. When I had it set up, I was surprised to see their were only two control buttons on the front: an On/Off switch and a Pause switch. Even my mono DeskJet 500 had more. Upon checking the manual (which in itself is the poorest excuse for documentation I have ever seen), I discovered that all the printers features were controlled by software which was included in the box on four floppies. And the software only ran under DOS version 3.3 or later, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95. In other words, buy a Bill Gates-controlled DOS box or forget about acquiring a new printer. To be fair, they make a model called the HP DeskWriter 680C which has software for Macs, but all other computers are left urinating into the ocean. If you don't have an IBM or Mac, your money is no good and HP doesn't want it.

So did I swallow my good sense and buy an I Burn Money machine? Of course not. I made the 680C work with my Mega4 STE, as all good Atarians will do. Even before this latest nonsense, printers (along with modems) cause the greatest amount of problems with computers, so you almost never can plug and play. Any computer. One good thing about the 680C is that there are no DIP switches which have to be set by the user. DIP switches cause so much trouble, they must have been another attack on poor computer users by Bill Gates.

When I bought my DeskJet 500, my only computer was an eight-bit 130 XE. All I wanted it to do was print out manuscripts to send to magazine editors, but the 8-bit was dead before inkjet printers even came out. So I did the only sensible thing and bought a case of beer and invited John Picken to my computer room. Thank God for user groups.



After testing the beer to make sure it worked properly, John looked at the manual. This manual was well written and contained much that was necessary, but John determined he would have to have the technical reference manual before he could write a printer driver for the XE. After it arrived and John perused it (plus drank a few more beers), I had a printer driver which, after setting 16 DIP switches on the printer, worked perfectly.

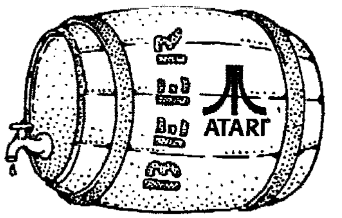
Then I bought my STE. I feared Molson's would be reporting record profits that quarter, but it turned out there were drivers for every program I used and Molson's stocks went into a mini-decline instead. Then I bought the 680C.

My DeskJet 500 had many switches on its front panel which controlled on/off, which fonts it printed, whether it printed in letter quality or draft, form feed, envelope switch and online switch. The 680C has the aforementioned two, and everything else is controlled by DOS software or Windows. One feature I can't access is draft printing, which saves on ink. I'll just have to do all editing on screen, so I only have to print the finished product. I should have been doing that all along, but I have to be hit by two by fours a couple of times before I do anything sensible. Envelope printing is no problem, you can either use labels or a DTP program which prints in landscape mode directly onto the envelope. Banner printing, one of the advertised features of the 680C, would require a program written for whichever computer you have.

Mr. Picken, by the way, says he could write software so that even an 8-bit could utilize the printer, if you can afford the beer. I had banner printing capabilities with my Roland 9 pin, but I only printed one bannerto see how it worked, and never did it again. It would be too expensive in either ribbons or ink cartridges. Not too important in the real world, in other words. Also, I never used the different font capabilities of the printer, as it was easier to change fonts by using software, and I don't do anything the hard way. Using different fonts by pushing switches on the printer also requires changing margins, line lengths and page lengths. I recommend the KISS strategy; Keep It Simple, Stupid. Most modern word processor software and all DTP software for the Atari offers different fonts and is simple to use, so use it. Being computer-challenged myself, I heartily recommend this method.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not completely against this printer. It does give quality colour printing at 300 DPI and black printing at 600 DPI at a very reasonable price. It has a separate cartridge for black ink which gives superior black than mixing CYM colours to make it. After a bit of work with software programs, you can access all the features of the printer. This newsletter's masters were printed on the 680C. The only objection I have to this printer is Hewlett Packard trying to force everyone to use Windows.

Picken's Page



by John Picken

PROGRESS?

A few years ago, your intrepid editor (the wannabe Idi Amin) bought himself a Hewlett-Packard DeskJet 500. It was a pretty impressive machine, offering laser quality print for a much lower cost than that of a laser printer. Of course, like everything else computer-oriented the prez buys, he didn't know how to make it work (why he's in the club). So, at the cost to Gordo of a six-pack of O'Keefe's finest, I went over to his place and spent an evening fooling around with it.

Oh s***! The printer's control language was so different from that of the quasi-standard Epson and IBM languages that it still didn't work. So, Gord sent off a pile of bucks to Hewlett-Packard for the Technical Reference Manual. Another evening and another six-pack (more like a 12-pack: *Idi Amin*) and everything worked fine.

A couple of months ago, Gord decided he just had to have colour. I thought that was a great idea as it meant I got to buy his old DeskJet at a bargain basement price while he forked out the bucks for a Hewlett-Packard 680C.

The 680C: an impressive machine. Instead of DIP switches and front panel controls, it had two buttons and an instruction manual that looked like it had been produced by Atari (pretty pictures but no information). Of course, HP kindly included several disks of software that require a 1.44mb drive to read and MicroSoft Windows to run. Great! all of us who choose to use anything other than a DOS-box are now written off as consumers.

It may come as a surprise to the marketing gurus at HP and other peripheral vendors but, the fact is there are a lot of computer users who do not subscribe to the IBM-MicroSoft-Intel (IMI) theory that we must forever buy new equipment and add-ons. Some of us are quite content with our ST's, Amigas, or 8-bit machines. We might, however, like a better printer, modem, or etc.

We can utilize new equipment if the manufacturers release the documentation required to marry it to our systems. If we can't set it up ourselves, there's always some programming freak in our user group who can. But, there's no way anyone can even take a shot at it without knowing the required control language. Like the old lady on TV said "Where's the beef?". In this case the "beef" is the documentation.

As one who has always been impressed by the quality and durability of Hewlett-Packard equipment, from calculators on up, I am disappointed that the company would release a product which may or may not function as advertised. The documentation which accompanied the DJ500 was almost complete enough to allow a programmer to set it up with any computer; the "documentation" for the 680C is a farce. Whether it works or not would be a guess.

What HP, and all the other peripheral manufacturers, need to recognize is that those of us who choose to use computers that do not meet the current IMI or Apple standards do purchase hardware and furthermore, that we do read and use documentation. Not all of us expect to purchase a cake mix, pop it in the microwave, and push START, as Windows users do.

Does the HP680C printer work as advertised? Who knows? Do you have to buy a new computer to run a new printer? Who knows? This, apparently, is progress.

8-Bit Stuff

EMPTY THE RAM AND MAKE IT WORK

One of the most frustrating things you can find with any computer is a piece of software that sounds great but doesn't work for you. If it's commercial (8-bit joke) you return it and grovel for a refund. But if it's PD, and you figure you'd like to get it to live up to it's reputation, you usually have to find a way to make it work on your own. The short program presented here will "fix" anywhere from 80-90% of machine language programs that apparently don't work on your Atari 8-bit.

I know I'm approaching heresy in suggesting that readers actually type in a program listing, but this one's so short I thought I'd stick my neck out. The BASIC listing produces a file called CLEARZPG.COM which can be used with any DOS. You load it under Atari-DOS and its clones, or just type it's name under a CP-type DOS like Sparta. If you've got an autorun file on a disk, rename it, copy CLEARZPG to AUTORUN.SYS and then append the old autorun to this new one.

What does CLEARZPG do? What the name says: it CLEARs Zero PaGe--the top half anyway. Why? Because Page Zero is prime real estate on a 6502-based computer. Programs run much faster with variables stored there and some operations are only possible by using the page for addressing. Generally, an application program is free to use the top half of the page ($80-$FF) while the operating system and DOS own the the lower half. The problem is not all software takes the trouble to ensure that Page Zero is clear before using it. Some programmers seem to have assumed that, as they hadn't stuffed anything into the memory, it would be filled with zero bytes. They forgot that the guy who wrote the program you ran before theirs left the page full of junk.

The worst offenders I've seen in this respect are compiled Action! programs. There's tons of great software, written in Action!, that bombs when you run it unless you physically turn off the computer and start cold. (By the way, don't blame this on the guy who wrote the Action! compiler. He did exactly what he should: he didn't design it to clear the page on the assumption your intrepid

See *8-Bit* on Page 10

Two New Library Disks

by Ted Skrecky

First, I will start by mentioning some bad news. The gates to Al Horton's Computer Dungeon have been closed. Computer Dungeon, located in the United States, was a good place to purchase used Atari software. Back in August of this year I bought a copy of Fate: Gates of Dawn for $9 (US). This is a game which, apparently, was never available for sale in North America when it was new but, thanks to Al, I was able to get a used copy. I was planning on purchasing more ST titles from him, however, due to some type of family related situation, he had to terminate his business. Computer Dungeon is gone but, at least, locally, Steve Lemmen continues to do Atari sales & hardware repairs and upgrades. Steve does have a "For Sale" list. Anybody interested in seeing what he currently has available can contact him at 595-7811.

The Atari SIG on the Victoria Freenet (479-6500) is still alive. To get to the Atari SIG, just type "go atari" once you have completed logging-on to the Freenet. The main purpose of this SIG is to give easy access to Atari related Usenet newsgroups and web pages. Unfortunately, the Victoria Freenet always has problems with its Usenet connect to the Internet. I have frequently posted messages and never seen any replies. However, the Cleveland Freenet has a significantly more stable Usenet connect so I usually post a message on a Victoria Freenet Usenet group such as comp.sys.atari.st and then go to the Cleveland Freenet to check for replies. Accessing other Freenets is quite easy. All you have to do is type "go freenet". If you want to visit the Cleveland Freenet, select the US Freenet option and then select the item number for the Cleveland Freenet. If my memory is correct, I believe both "9" and "10" will directly connect you to this Freenet. You can sign-on as a "guest" and then type "go atari" to get into their Atari SIG.

One thing I would like to mention with respect to reading Usenet newsgroups on the Freenet is, if you want to capture to your buffer a certain range of messages, you can make your life a bit easier by using the "#" key. If you want to capture message #15000 to #15200, type "#" and hit the "return" key and then type "T" and then again hit the "return" key. Make sure you type the letter "T" in uppercase. Next, type "15000 - 15200" and then hit the "return" key. The messages in this range will be automatically scrolled-up your screen and into your buffer. You can sit back and watch TV and then, when everything is done, save the buffer to a disk. Next, all you need is a good text editor such as Everest in order to read the messages.

Version 4.0 of the ST club catalogue has been completed. I have added a couple of new disks. On disk #195 there is Version 1.40 of TeraDesk. I am currently using TeraDesk and can highly recommend it if you have a hard drive. It has one major feature which is extremely cool. You can create desktop icons for your favourite programs. There are several programs which I use frequently and it really does save alot of time if you can just click on an icon instead of having to run around opening windows. I have found with some programs, such as Everest, I can grab a file from a window directory and then "drop" it on the program icon. By using this method, I can get Everest to automatically load a text file and display it on the screen. I would like to mention, though, I am currently using Version 1.36 of TeraDesk. This is available on Disk #128. I tried using Version 1.40 but I found, when exiting back to the desktop after running some programs, a message would appear saying "This is not a GEMDOS file". I have either not configured Version 1.40 properly or, maybe, the new Version of TeraDesk isn't very happy with the fact that my computer has TOS 1.2. Instead of trying to figure-out how to fix this problem, I took the easy way out by ignoring it and going back to using the older version.

Disk #196 has three programs which I like. One is Version 2.3 of the Hard Disk Optimizer. A couple of weeks ago I used it to "defrag" all my hard drive partitions. I haven't had any problems with corrupted programs and lost data so my conclusion is that this program actually works! The second really yummy program is Silkmouse. This is a mouse accelerator and it really makes my bog-standard Atari mouse feel like one of those expensive mice which cost two months worth of salary. The third program I enthusiastically approve of is Heartland. This is a new multi-screen platform game written in STOS. It is worth having a look at.

Well, that is about all I have to say for this edition of the library report. The following is a complete listing of files available on the new disks:

AUDIO.LZH 4K #195-How to add audio ports to an Atari ST computer.
GDOSFNT1.LZH 202K #195-79 Hi-Rez GDOS fonts converted from the Mac.
LHA301.TOS 284K #195-Version 3.01 of LHarc. Shell program and English docs included. Note: This is a self-extracting file.
STAR_DEM.LZH 76K #195-Demo of Super Starioland, a commercial platform game.
ST_MULTI.LZH 8K #195-How to connect an ST to a Multisync Monitor. TDSK140A.LZH 198K #195-TeraDesk Version 1.4. An alternative desktop for the ST. Really useful for hard drive owners as you can do neat stuff such as create desktop icons for your favourite programs.

BANGBLST.LZH 174K #196-Bang & Blast Man. 2 player Bomberman clone. NOTE: Place files in the main directory of a disk.
HEARTLND.LZH 260K #196-Heartland by Stosser Software. Huge multi-screen platform game.

HP_OPT23.LZH 90K #196-Hard Disk Optimizer Version 2.3. Defragger & optimizer. It is fast and it even works!

ISLAND.LZH 213K #196-Island Strike. Fly your helicopter over an 8-way scrolling playfield. Rescue hostages, blow-up bridges & collect cool stuff. NOTE: Do not place files in a folder.

SLKMOUSE.LZH 21K #196-Silkmouse Version 3.0. Excellent mouse accelerator.
TRUEDISK.LZH 18K #196-TrueDisk Version 2.3. Reset-proof RAMDisk.

Installing An Application

by John Towler

Would you like to be able to double-click on a text file to start your word processor and load the file? What if selecting a graphics file fired up an image editor and displayed the file? How about double-clicking on a compressed file, and having the .TTP archiver automatically de-compress it, without entering a file path or switches into a parameter dialog? Do you sometimes see the file you want to work with in an open window on your ST, but the program you need to use is in another folder? Ever since TOS 1.0, the ST has had a way to help you work more easily with files, yet relatively few users are aware of it, or take advantage of it.

The secret is to install your most used applications. And what exactly is "installing an application"? Simply, it is a way you can instruct the operating system, TOS, to run the appropriate program when you double-click on a file with a preset file extender, and then load that file into the program. You may have noticed the selection "install application" under the Options menu at the desktop. Single click on a program: for example, a word processor. Then select "install application." You will see a dialog prompting you to enter a "document type." If your word processor saves files with the extender ".DOC," enter that three letter extender. Select the program type: GEM for programs with a .PRG or APP extender, TOS for those with a .TOS extender, or "takes parameters" for those programs with a .TTP or .GTP extender. Now save your desktop, so that you won't lose the change when you shut off your computer. That's it! If you want to use a file extender which includes a wildcard, such as * or ?, you can. Be aware of the possibility for conflicts, though. As an example, a text processor installed for the extender .A* will not only load files with the extender .ASC, but will also try to load archived files with the extender .ARC. For that matter, the program will try to load any file type whose extender begins with "A". A graphics program installed for the extender .PI? will handle all files with the extenders .PIC, PI1, PI2, PI3, etc. However, if the program or the resolution you're using can't work with all those formats, you might have problems. So be quite specific, and try to think of any incompatible files which might get included.

While you are looking at the "install application" window, a few things are worth pointing out. If you have TOS 1.04 or later, there is a selection in this window to set that program to automatically boot whenever you start the computer. Note that if you use this, you will only want to set one program to autoboot. Some programs want their resource and data files in the same directory as the program. With TOS 2.0 or later, you can direct the program to look for these files in the "Top" window. Some replacement desktops do the same thing by allowing you to set the path to "document" instead of "program." This will allow you to keep these files elsewhere and still successfully install them. And lastly, TOS 2.0 and later allow you to preset parameters to pass to the application, if you are one of those people who like command lines.

Some disclaimers are in order at this point. The first one is about TOS 1.00 and 1.02. These versions of the operating system always look to floppy drive A for the application to run, even though it may actually be on a hard drive. If the program is inside a folder on the disk in A, the file has to be in the same folder. If the program is in the root directory of A, its files may be placed inside other folders, even on other drives. There is a possible solution, which I'll describe later. TOS versions from 1.04 allow you to place the program anywhere, as will using a replacement desktop such as NeoDesk or Hotwire (commercial software) or TeraDesk (shareware). If you use a hard drive, you obviously won't want to be restricted to keeping your apps on drive A, or putting the files into the same folder, so TOS 1.04 or later or a replacement desktop is the way to go.

The second disclaimer is probably somewhat obvious from the first. While installing applications will work on a system with only one or two floppy drives, it is severely restricted. For it to work, you must always have the programs you might want in a floppy drive. If you have a hard drive, your software will always be available, assuming your operating system is TOS 1.04 or newer.

The last disclaimer is that not all programs can be successfully installed. Some will run, but not load the file you've clicked. The only way to find out is to try installing and see what happens. The failures are usually old programs which didn't follow GEM programming guidelines. Also, a program might not run if a necessary system addition like GDOS isn't running.

There are two other restrictions, which aren't necessarily problems at all. If you like to view certain files from the desktop (invoking the "Show, Print, Cancel" dialog), don't install an application for those extenders. I use NeoDesk, though, and it allows me to install for an extender, and still view that type of file from the desktop when I like by holding the Alternate key when I double-click on it. If you use a replacement desktop, it may allow you to do something similar. The second restriction is that you can't install more than one file type for each program. Or can you?

Figure 1

```
#G 03 04 00E E:\WORDS\EVEREST\EVEREST.PRG@ *.ASC@ @
#G 03 04 000 D:\UTILITY\ARC\STZIP.PRG@ *.ZIP@ @
#P 03 04 000 D:\UTILITY\ARC\LHARCENG.TTP@ *.LZH@ @
#P 03 04 000 D:\UTILITY\ARC\ARC602ST.TTP@ *.ARC@ @
#G 03 04 000 C:\APPLIER.PRG *.IMG@ @
```

Actually, by editing the DESKTOP.INF or NEWDESK.INF file, you can install a program for as many file types as you wish. Just open the desktop file with any text or word processor which will save in simple, unadorned ASCII text. You will see some lines similar to those shown in Figure 1.

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130XE With Hot Rod Pipes!

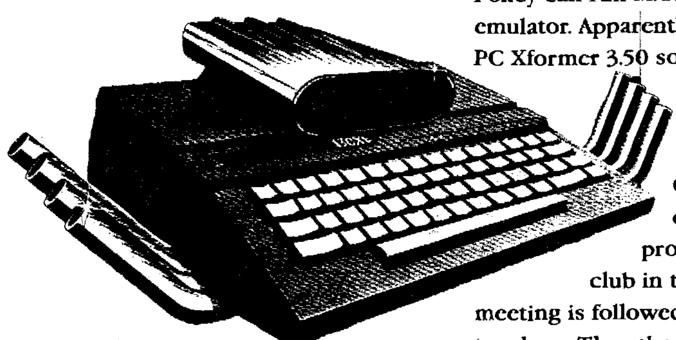
by Rowland Grant

More sad news for the Atari 8-bit community, Jim Hood died on Friday November 2nd. When Ben Poehland gave up on Atari Classics magazine, Jim Hood and Bob Woolley offered to continue it. Jim was already publishing other periodicals. He had the connections and resources that made it possible to publish Atari Classics and meet the expenses. Shortly after Jim finished his first issue of Atari Classics, he was diagnosed as having cancer of the throat. He died from complications arising from this affliction. His home address was the publishing address of Atari Classics. For now, the new address will be Robert Woolley, 1161 Bay Street, Alameda, CA 94501.

During Jim Hood's illness Bob Woolley took over as editor, and began to assume responsibility for more of the work. In October, Bob reported that they were in the last stages of layout, and the next issue of Atari Classics should be ready to ship in three weeks or so. We don't know what will happen to Atari Classics now. We had been promised articles on Bob Woolley's 8-bit hardware projects. Things like 80 column screens in hardware, 4MB SIMM upgrade, IDE interface, floppy drive interface, 65816 upgrade, dual Antic chips and so on. Information on the IDE interface has been eagerly awaited. Because Atari 8-bit operating systems will handle sectors no larger than 256 bytes, while PC's use 512 byte sectors, it is not possible to use all the capacity of current IDE hard drives. But a 2GB drive (available at reasonable cost nowadays) would leave a capacity of one GB. Enough perhaps. It was not so long ago that a 90K floppy seemed to have lots of capacity. If you want to appreciate any Atari disk drive, try using an Atari 410 tape recorder for awhile.

Ian Chadwick is still preparing an on-line version of his book, Mapping the Atari. He is using an optical character reader (OCR) to get the text into ASCII form. This is edited and coded to be used with an HTML reader with cross referencing capacity. Ian says that the project will take a month or more, unless others help out. The files will be put in a suitable Atari FTP site and on the Web for anyone to download. Mapping the Atari was one of the most popular books on 8-bit Atari's, and essential for programming. Apparently Ian Chadwick owns all copyrights to his book.

Eric Bacher reports that he had just completed an Atari specific 6502 disassembler that runs on a PC under Windows. It's called DIS6502. This is an interactive disassembler. It handles all or any part of a binary file. The object is to create a code listing that can be altered and reassembled. It will disassemble .ATR and .XFD disk images of binary code. The disassembler will put in all the standard equates, and can be set to properly handle data sections in the code. The code can be customized for a particular assembler. DIS6502 seems to be shareware, as the author refers to registered users. A version of MAC65 is available for use with Atari 8-bit emulators on the PC, courtesy Fine Tooned Engineering. And Mapping the Atari will be on-line soon. Anyone with a PC running Windows should be well equipped to do assembly language programming for Atari 8-bit computers. So there's another practical use for a PC.



According to Darek Mihocka, an old Atari 8-bit computer will be accepted as a trade-in towards the purchase of PC Xformer (MS-DOS) or Xformer 96 (Windows 95, NT) or the Gemulator Gold CD. He didn't say how much credit he gives for a computer. There has been some complaint about the sound emulation of PC Xformer. It is a difficult hack to do four channel sound with different levels of distortion. Mike Hill claims to have come close with his Atari 800XL emulator called Pokey. This emulator is for MS-DOS computers. He provides circuit information on building an appropriate sound and printer port card. However the Pokey software doesn't handle printers yet. One of the tests of an emulator is whether or not it can run the popular M.U.L.E. game. Pokey can run M.U.L.E. as can XL-it, another emulator. Apparently this game still gives PC Xformer 3.50 some trouble.

ABBUC held its annual general meeting on October 26th in Herten Germany. It is a national club with 540 members, probably the largest 8-bit club in the world. The two hour meeting is followed by a four hour computer show. They then adjourn to a restaurant. Now there's an idea. Chris Friend (chris_friend@juno.com) says that he will be putting out an Atari 8-bit newsletter beginning in October. He proposes to have articles and type in programs. Bill Wilkinson, who ran O.S.S., is selling the original painting for the BASIC XE advertisement. It showed a 130XE computer with hot rod exhaust pipes and intake ports of a souped up carburettor. Just the thing for an Atari collector who has everything else. William Kendrick reports seeing a new graphics mode called the HIP. It gives 30 shades in high resolution (160x192). It is created from the blending of two graphics 9 images using interlaced page flipping. The old 8-bit Atari is great for software and hardware hacking, almost as if it was designed for that purpose.

Thanks, Don Bell!

The September General meeting featured ST Hints and Tips by John Towler. John brought his TT for the demonstration. He also brought his new multi-sync VGA colour monitor. The TT looks very good in high resolution colour. John's talks are always very well prepared and very clear. John outlined some neat ways of installing applications using special software such as APPLIER. He started programs using function key macros and other tricks using Neodesk 4. John also demonstrated the creation and use of macros using Code Keys software.

Don Bell kindly sent us the remainder of his Atari 8-bit public domain library, some 800 disks in all. We will reorganize our library around this collection. Don's gift has great value because the disks are all catalogued. The catalogue represents an enormous amount of work over a number of years. John Picken volunteered to help our librarian transfer the essentials of Don's print based catalogue to disk. Our own catalogue will be updated and added to it in some systematic manner. This will take awhile. I expect that we will end up with a library of more than 1200 disks storing up to 130 megabytes of 8-bit files. Don also sent a couple of commercial ST games: Frontline and Dive Bomber. And he sent a copy of BOS. This is an operating system that enables Business Operating Software programs to run on a ST. BOS began on mainframe computers. We also received some 8-bit software and a blitter chip. The software was bought by interested members, adding a modest sum to our treasury. To express our thanks, Don Bell was made an honourary member of Garden City ACE with all privileges. Don uses a Mega ST.

The October General Meeting featured a look at Craig Carmichael's Interactive Author software. Interactive Author is used to create programmed learning software that runs under the OASES operating system. Craig is adding more power to the software by including a scripting language. This gives the author/programmer more detailed control. Now Craig is working on a simple BASIC interpreter for inclusion as well. A full featured BASIC interpreter running under Craig's OASES operating system would be very handy too. It would make it easier to write programs for the OASES environment. Craig also commented on his demonstration of Interactive Author to some members of the school district.

The new magazine *Atari Computing* came up for discussion. The club decided to take out a subscription. Recently we learned that we don't have to send to Scotland for it. Computer Direct in Edmonton is the Canadian agent. After what happened to *Atari World* magazine, Computer Direct is cautious about *Atari Computing*. They will only sell a subscription for three issues. Send E-mail inquiries to info@compdirect.com on the internet.

by Rowland Grant

8-Bit

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programmer might want to stash some stuff there before running his masterpiece.)

CLEARZPG is the answer to this. It works so well, I include it in all my batch files prior to running something like TextPRO or MAC/65. Where a machine language program requires Atari DOS, I simply append it to a copy of CLEARZP and rename the compound file to the original name. The following eight lines of BASIC will produce CLEARZPG.COM for you on D1:

```
10 OPEN #1,8,0,"D1:CLEARZPG.COM"
20 TRAP 40
30 READ BYTE:PUT #1,BYTE:GOTO 30
40 END
50 DATA 255,255,192,3,201,3
60 DATA 96,169,0,170,149,128
70 DATA 232,16,251,96,226,2
80 DATA 227,2,193,3
```

That's it--a whopping 22 bytes and 12 of them are OS/DOS overhead! Try it. I think you'll find a lot of software that didn't run correctly for you, except after a boot, works fine after you CLEARZPG.

For Sparta users: call your programs with a batch file as, for example:

;PP.BAT to run the DaisyDot PP.COM ; KEY OFF TD OFF BASIC OFF CLEARZPG PP CLEARZPG

The above clears the RAM, both before you enter the print processor and after you exit, so stuff to follow will also run correctly.

Applications

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Select the program you would like to use for more than one file type and copy that line, putting in the second file type. (The following listing was too large to fit in the available space. Each line starts with # and is then continuous. It should look like Figure one: *Editor*)

```
#G 03 04 00E E:\WORDS\EVEREST\
  EVEREST.PRG@ *.ASC@ @
#G 03 04 00E E:\WORDS\EVEREST\
  EVEREST.PRG@ *.TXT@ @
#G 03 04 000D:\UTILITY\ARC\STZIP.PRG@
  *.ZIP@ @
#P 03 04 000D:\UTILITY\ ARC\
LHARCENG. TTP@ *.LZH@ @
#P 03 04 000 D:\UTILITY\ARC\ARC602ST.
  TTP@ *.ARC@ @
#G 03 04 000 C:\APPLIER.PRG *.IMG@ @
#G 03 04 000 C:\APPLIER.PRG *.PI?@ @
```

Here, I've installed Everest for .ASC and .TXT file types. If you want even more files to be handled by that program, simply repeat this process for each file type. Save the desktop file when you are finished. Note the "#G" or "P" at the beginning of each line. The letter G indicates a program with the extender .PRG. If the installed application is a .TOS program, the line will begin with #F, whereas for a .TTP program it will begin with #P and for a .GTP program it will begin with #Y.

If you are using TOS 1.0 or 1.02, you will

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New Viruses Warning!

by Rowland Grant

The new magazine *Atari Computing* was introduced at Computer shows in Birmingham and in London. The first issue was sold out, and the demand is such that a further printing has been arranged. This is a good sign. The second issue is scheduled for late November and the third late in January. They expect to continue *Atari Computing* as a bimonthly magazine. There were reviews, and quite a number of feature articles including one by Howard Carson of Current Notes. *Atari Computing* is not printed in colour, but was reported to be of professional quality. Joe Connor is the editor. Frank Charlton (from *ST Format*) was involved as co-editor at the startup of *Atari Computing*, but he seems to have dropped out. They have now arranged to sell the magazine through agents in various countries. In Canada, Computer Direct is listed as the agent. Each issue with disk is $11.99 (CDN) postpaid, (GST extra grrrr). Subscriptions for three issues are available for $38.49 inclusive. The address is Computer Direct, 10338-59 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 1E6. Toll free orders: (800)547-9203. Information: (403)496-2488, Fax: (403)496-2489. Also the agent in the U.S.A. is advertising subscriptions for three and six issues. The price per copy is $8.00 (US). The address is Rich Tietjens, 8495A SW Hemlock, Tigard, Oregon 97223.

Another Atari user magazine devoted to the ST platform is being arranged by Matthew Townsend in Britain (Wales actually). This will be called *IC* magazine (Independent Computing). It will begin as a fortnightly newsletter of three pages. The first three issues will cost 1.50 pounds. The launch date was to be September 30. However, this depended on the response to Matthew's internet notices. I have heard nothing recently. While there are few print magazines there are several disk based publications devoted to the ST. These are easy to publish and distribute, and they come and go. In Britain alone there are now five: Ataraphile, ST+, STOSSER, MAGGIE, ST Highway. Most are issued at irregular intervals except for ST+ which is released monthly. Now in the U.S., I notice that Atari Users of North Texas (AUNT) are releasing a combination newsletter and disk of the month. Their initial issue filled three high density disks and was formatted in HTML. It is not clear whether or not these disks will even run on ST computers, as they say that the targeted group is those users who have Windows or Mac machines at work. They are offering these disks to other user groups who would like to contribute articles to the magazine. A cooperative magazine on disk is an attractive idea. However, I would prefer to have a disk that I can pop into my ST, and read immediately.

Frank Swygert is publisher of "*The World of 68' Micros*" magazine. There were many generic computer types using the 68000 microprocessor. A popular operating system available for these computers was OS-9. *The World of '68* magazine is devoted to users of these hobby computers. Now Frank is inviting ST users to contribute to his magazine. I guess the ST is a hobby computer for some. He is interested in alternate operating systems on the ST such as MINT and other UNIX types. Articles on hardware modifications are also solicited. Some years ago Cumana released a version of OS-9 for the ST. I haven't heard anything about it recently.

Toad Computers held its annual ATARIFEST in October this year. Over 200 people attended, that's more than last year. They came for the bargains. Toad brought out literally tons of old Atari games, parts and stock that had accumulated in storage. Afterwards, there were remarks to effect that this would be the final ATARIFEST. Also having moved a lot of stock, Toad was poised for a new era. Many took this to mean that Toad was dropping Atari products entirely. Not so! However as new products related to the ST are getting fewer each year, Toad has been expanding its other product lines. In fact, Toad has been selling its own brands of PC clones for several years. ICD is also moving into the PC market. At ATARIFEST, Tom Harker demonstrated a new video capture device called SnapDragon for the PC, as well as the latest version of BattleSphere on the Jaguar. In Germany, the ATARI MESSE 96 will be held in Dusseldorf (30 November and 1 December). New hardware and software for all Atari products, computers and game machines is promised. The Atari shows in Birmingham and London in September were very successful and well attended. If anything, these shows act as a continual check on the vital signs of the Atari computer market. It ain't dead yet.

Darek Mihocka demonstrated his latest ST emulator, Gemulator 96, at Toad's ATARIFEST. He sold quite a few too. This latest version is for Windows machines only. He claims that it is also some 30 percent faster than earlier versions and three times as fast as competing emulators such as Magic PC and Janus. Darek is offering free upgrades for registered users of recent versions and a $29.95 fee for upgrades to earlier versions. More interesting is the trade-in offer. A working ST can be exchanged for a credit of up to $179.95 towards the DOS or Windows version of Gemulator, complete with ROM card. Credit will also be given for Magic PC software and Janus cards. What will Darek do with all the trade-ins?

Some ST software is still being upgraded. Missionware has announced its tenth upgrade of the Flash II terminal program. The latest version number is 3.02. Flash II has been completely rewritten to make it compatible with the current multitasking environments such as Geneva and MagiC. It will run on any TOS computer including the Hades variants such as DirecT60. It is available for $59.95 (US). Geneva, the cooperative multitasking sys-

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tem, is also being upgraded to version 005. The new version has improved speed as well as the usual bug fixes. Owners of earlier versions can obtain a patch from Gribnif. HiSoft has released a demo version of Papyrus 4.25. The full version with documentation in English should be available by now. Apparently there will be no more upgrades of HiSoft's Lattice C system for TOS computers. Protext word processor was not available for some time due to the bankruptcy of its publisher. However the copywrite reverted to the authors, who are now releasing Protext 6.7 by mail order. The initial version will be for the PC, but a TOS version is to follow. Protext 6.7 will sell for about 40 pounds. Work is underway on a version 7, but it's part-time work. For ST users who want to interact with the World Wide Web (www), there is news from Oxo Concept of an effective browser called Webspace. It is compatible with HTML specifications and Netscape. It features an intuitive GEM interface. It does require 4MB of RAM and at least 10 MB of Hard drive space (100MB is better). No price was given. Nicholas Flintham has released updated versions of the components of his www accessing system. These components are the well known Cab, STik, Finger, AtarIRC and Cached. They can be organised into a directory structure by an installation program that Nicholas provides.

Much has been made of Microsoft's Visual BASIC. This allows a programmer to construct attractive Windows interfaces and processes visually. The programmer selects the image and Visual BASIC puts together the corresponding BASIC code. Now a kind of Visual BASIC for TOS computers is available called FACE VALUE. This software will create program subroutines in GFA BASIC code, making GEM programming rather easy. FACE VALUE is sold in North America by Systems for Tomorrow for about $70. GFA BASIC 3.5 and a resource construction set is required. Another interesting piece of software for programmers is Eureka, by Francois Le Coat. Eureka is a 2D numerical analysis program that can be extended to 3D modelling of mathematical shapes. Animating and morphing these shapes is possible. The data can be exported in VRML form. Also Eureka can use image captures. The documentation is in both French and English. Francois writes that Eureka is part of a larger project. His goal is to make software for TOS computers that is comparable to Mathematica or Matlab on other platforms. Eureka is being distributed as freeware to get feed-back and bug reports. Then there is OBOLUS by Karsten Reincke. This is available as resultware, that is, freeware to interested programmers. OBOLUS is GEM based software for representing knowledge. It includes an inference engine for creating expert systems. It contains its own documentation in hypertext files using both English and German. I've seen this kind of software used on the PC. For instance a medical diagnosis program, using a Prolog interpreter as the inference engine, was as accurate in diagnosis as most doctors. For those interested in somewhat lighter software, Tony Greenwood of STOSSER magazine fame, has released HEARTLAND. This is a platform game compiled in STOS, naturally. HEARTLAND is available on the Pothole BBS.

New TOS hardware is appearing too. The latest is a computer by Centek in France. It was given the temporary name Cent40. It is not a TT clone. Cent40 is more like an advanced Falcon. The CPU is a Motorola 68040/66 (or an 060). There is fast DSP circuitry compatible with Falcon software. The bus uses 32 bit 32 Mhz PCI circuitry, so any contemporary PC boards can be used. There is a special peripheral controller that moves data easily between RAM and peripherals through DMA channels. It also serves as a 32 bit DMA blitter. Graphics is handled by 24 bit PCI boards. The storage devices are SCSI. A voice synthesizer is included. The Cent40 will have its own operating system compatible with TOS. They claim its VDI is faster than NVDI. The proposed price with 800 MB hard drive is around 800 pounds (UK). Very reasonable. In Britain, HiSoft is making another move into hardware with their SMD-100 Video CD MPEG Decoder. It can be used as a stand alone unit connected to a CD-ROM drive. It can also serve as one of the SCSI devices attached to a computer. Extra software is required for this, and unfortunately HiSoft does not list ST's as one of the platforms the unit is targeted for. However it should work with any computer that can handle SCSI. As a stand alone unit the SMD-100 can be connected to TV or video recorders to produce playback of Video CD films. Finally, there is some news from Wizztronics. The elaborate and expensive Barracuda accelerator board for Falcon computers will not go into production. However there are about 80 Hawk accelerator boards being field tested at the moment, so the much cheaper Hawk upgrade might be available for Atari Falcons soon.

You'd think that virus makers would be ignoring TOS based computers nowadays. However, two new viruses have been reported in 1996. One is the Pharaoh virus. This virus rearranges the disk's FAT table and produces a noise after five copies of itself have been made. The Pharaoh virus is hard to find since it can encrypt itself. It does not copy to hard drives or high density disks. The other is the Carpe Diem virus. This copies itself to the boot sector of a floppy disk and after a certain time will crash the system. It can reside on a hard drive as a hidden file in the auto folder. It first turned up as a bogus game called CARPDIEM.PRG. There is an elaborate procedure for getting rid of this virus. To keep up with all this, Ultimate Virus Killer is being updated continually. Richard Karsmakers is releasing version 6.9 now. It is a commercial program available in North America through Oregon Software. A further version 7.0 is due out in January 1997. New viruses, another sign of life in TOS computers.

Application

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notice that the desktop file doesn't specify a full pathname, just the file name. You could type in the rest of the pathname and see if this allows you to place your installed applications on a drive other than A. No guarantees, though.

So far, we've only been able to assign a given file type to one program. There is a way around this restriction; it's a freeware program called APPLIER, written by John Eidsvoog. Applier allows you to install multiple extenders for one application or use the same extender on different programs. It will even pass parameters to programs which use them when you double-click files. This last feature is great for archiving programs, letting you to compress, decompress, or update archives or do anything else you can wish using the archiver's allowable parameters.

Applier works by becoming a master installed application. You prepare a simple text file, which Applier reads when it starts. This file gives the key combinations which specify which program to run. By using the Left Shift, Control and Alternate keys, up to eight different combinations are available. Now install Applier as the application for that file type. You can have as many as eight programs installed for one file type. To have Applier control another file type, simply edit your desktop file as I have above, and prepare the APPLIER.DAT file to select between applications for that file extender. So Applier allows both multiple file types per program and multiple installed applications per file type. And if you like command lines, you can control the sending of parameters to programs to boot!

By installing your most heavily used programs, you can increase the power and convenience of your ST, and it won't even cost any money! "Power without the price" was one reason many of us bought STs, after all.